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ABSTRACT

The question of the place of books in a classroom using computers appears to be simple, yet it is one of vital concern to teachers. The availability of programs (few of which focus on literary appreciation), the mesmerizing qualities of the computer, its distortion of time, the increasing power of computers over teacher time, and the computer's role in teaching basic literacy are all factors to consider. But literature in the classroom must survive. It is an essential balance to the influence of the computerization of the curriculum. The survival of literature in the schools requires teachers to become committed readers, to make time for reading in the classroom, and to promote literature throughout the faculty. A review of 146 children's books published in 1983 by American and Canadian publishers indicates that most were for the upper intermediate grades, and most were in the form of fiction, nonfiction, or picture books. Books that will appeal to the buying public include old favorites, traditional folk tales, humor, and those that provide new perspectives and self-discovery. Teachers will have to fight actively for the place of literature in the classroom by selecting only quality books and by making time to read an important issue in the school. (Several recommended children's titles are summarized, and a bibliography is included.) (HTH)

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EXPLORE THE FUTURE:

WILL BOOKS HAVE A PLACE IN THE COMPUTER CLASSROOM?

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EXPLORE THE FUTURE:

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It is a well known fact in the natural world that only the strongest survive. It is as true for wolves as it is for moose caribou or killer whales. In children's books the element of popularity blooms (a la Blume!) forth to determine the life-span of a particular title. Receiving a Newbery or Caldecott award guarantees future print survival in the enormous American marketplace. It is an exciting phenomenon when a quality book, one which will be enjoyed by children, receives the Newbery Award and thus guarantees its future survival. Such is the case with Beverly Cleary's 1983 book, Dear Mr. Henshaw.(Morrow) Imagine a book composed entirely of letters: a series of letters from an elementary youngster to his favourite author. Initially short,funny and demanding, the tone changes as the boy matures and grows to accept his feelings about his parent's separation, his classmates, his desire to write and his search for self-importance.

THE FUTURE IS EARLY

For many people the future has arrived ahead of schedule as we have truly entered into the midst of THE AGE OF INFORMATION. It is inconceivable the effect that the ubiquitous microchip has had on the speed with which information can be retrieved, processed, and acted upon: boggling the mind of those of us born in the commencement of the television era. It used to be that one felt old when the policeman on the street corner looked like a mere youngster. However, the police officer is now not on the corner,and a vast technological generation gap has appeared. Increasing the width of this gap for adults is the growing presence of FEAR. That fear today is of INTERFACING!

Computer-widows and mothers will readily testify about the fascinating appeal of computers as their husband or children bytingly interface. There is some thought being espoused that these could be indeed classified as terminal cases!

It is staggering to realize the access to information that children have with a personal micro-computer and a telephone. A child working at home can have access to more information in one evening than his parents could accumulate in a lifetime. This can be done faster and with more efficiency--so why ask mum or dad and risk a hassle? Could this not also be true regarding teachers and librarians?

Intriguing as interfacing appears to be, it is only one form of communication. Actually it appeals to introverts because there is not the necessity for any interpersonal commmunication. You don't have to talk to people! It is just you and the computer! Tea for one! The overall effect of this isolationist phenomenon will not be felt for another few years,yet evidence states that classroom social interaction declines dramatically when computers are introduced. Hence, we must consider whether or not we devote sufficient time in our schools to encourage social interaction and better personal communication techniques. Are we providing sufficient literary experiences for our students to share with others?

BITS,BYTES OR BOOKS?

The question of the place of books in a computer classroom appears to be simple yet it is one which is of vital importance to teachers. Gilles Fortier in a recent article in the Journal of Reading, entitled "Reading in the Future: The brain language, or how to read without the eyes." concurs with predictions that forecast the demise of the printed word by the year 2001. He visualizes their replacement by a type of bar code impressions. Books will consist of only pictures or videos. "No visible text will be necessary since information on illustrations will be sent

directly to the brain, in brain language."(p.168) "Reading will take the form of direct brain decoding of electrical signals and writing will be done by an apparatus that will directly encode the brain's thoughts!"(p.167)

There is further evidence concerning the impact of computers in the classroom which must be considered.

A. AVAILABILITY:

As more and more computers are being placed into classrooms,there is a resultant dramatic surge in the number of programs available. Few such programs attempt to focus on literary appreciation and awareness of the delight of language. Instead it is far easier to design a program which " details a computerized method for converting prose training materials into different form which forces trainees to read at some specified minimum level of comprehension." (Carver.R.P. "New Techniques and Improving Reading Comprehension. Research Report 1. Silver Spring.MD: AIRBS,1973.p74.) Such activities as playing "Verb Viper" or "Word Invasion" may prove interesting,but for how long?

B. TERMINAL MESMORIZATION:

Ease of operation,action appeal, enjoyment and success: these factors all contribute to a rapt fascination for working with computers. There is a sense of achievement and feeling in control,even if it is in just filling the screen. All else is forgotton except for the task at hand.

C. TIME WARPAGE:

It is impossible to realize the amount of time spent in front of the screen of a terminal. Time simply flies by because of the active involvement,lack of perceived distractions and intense concentration of the individual. As there is only so much time in a child's day, the filling of a good portion of it by interacting with a terminal raises questions of just how much time can be left over for other activities?

D.PROFESSIONAL INTIMIDATION:

There is evidence to suggest that teachers are sitting back and letting computer programs take the lead. Rather than define the computer's role in the educational setting, and realizing that it is not in competition, many are waiting, waiting, waiting....

E. BASIC LITERACY:

Computers provide basic education! This is their primemost role! Children see an immediate need to read and to spell correctly so that they can successfully operate their programs! Time can thus be released for other imaginative activities.

IS THERE A PLACE FOR LITERATURE IN THE COMPUTER CLASSROOM?

ABSOLUTELY! I have no doubt that quality books and literature will continue to exist. They are one of the essential elements in defining the humanity of all of us.

However, for at least the present, we shall have to fight for them. The captivating appeal of the terminal screen triumphs steadily onward as the number of children with computers available to them increases. I do not believe in the predictions of the technological prophets who say that books are a dying form and that we shall read our newspapers and books at terminals. Not when power outages are still possible! Furthermore,one cannot read at a terminal all day long; it is simply too straining on the eyes. Readers also want more control over the medium: to read or not to read at will.

It cannot be denied that computers have made a dramatic impact on the entire publishing field. Authors are using word processors to compose their literary works, and in some cases can send them directly to the publisher, where editors can edit them on their own screens. Much of the work involved in the format composition and printing of books is now being done by computer. This reduces the cost of publishing by not requiring editing as well as shortening the time needed to publish. It may well ensure a better product.

WHY READ?

Why does anyone read fiction? Susan Cooper, herself a well-renown author,observes that "the reason,simply,is entertainment. The novel entertains by offering refreshment, solace,excitement,relaxation, perhaps even inspiration: an escape from reality. And the escape, in turn, brings encouragement, leaving the reader fortified to cope with his own reality when he returns to it."

Literature must survive: it is an essential balance to the influence of the computerization of the curriculum. It provides a humanizing and enriching quality to the lives of youngsters as they have an opportunity to inter(face) with life. Literature is able to meaningfully relate to youngsters' developing emotional maturity fostering, as Louise Rosenblatt astutely observes, a transaction between the reader and the text. If the vital contact time between individual children and their friends is cut down, literature may indeed be the only way children become aware of such unique human phenoma as loneliness,despair,love or sensing the joy of living. Our survival depends on our ability to understand and resolve conflicts. Computers cannot reason for us. Reading does make a difference! Consider the following excerpt from Chapter One of A Solitary Blue.

When Jeff Greene was in second grade, seven and a half years old, he got home from school one Tuesday afternoon in early March, and found a note from his mother, saying that she had gone away and would not be coming back. He could read the note by himself:

Dear Jeffie,

You know I love you best, better than anything. I love to come into your room when you are in bed, and read The Lorax to you,and then kiss you on each big gray eye before you go to sleep. I am going away, but I'm not really going away from you. I will hold you in my heart, and you will hold me in your heart, and we can't ever be very far from each other then, can we?

There are some hot dogs in the refrigerator. If you don't remember how to cook them for bread sandwiches, you will have to ask the Professor for money when he gets home and go get some rolls. But you shouldn't bother him for unimportant things, so try hard to remember. You're my helper, my best assistant, you remember everything. You won't need to ask, will you?

I will think about you tonight, eating hotdog sandwiches, and I will be very sad and missing you. But you are old enough now, and there are people everywhere who need me, little boys like you who don't get enough to eat and are hungry every night when they go to bed. Imagine that, Jeffie. You know how I feel about that. Or children with no parents at all to take care of them and grownups who can't help themselves and little animals hunted down and wiped out and air and water made dirty. I have to help the people who need me. I have to try to make things better, for you and for all the little children. You are big enought to understand. It is such a big job that I will not be able to come back to see you, so I have to say goodbye.

Goodbye, little boy,
my own sweet Jeffie,
from your sad
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Cynthia Voigt forces the reader to react,as did seven-year-old Jeff, to the letter stating why his mother left. All of a sudden the world becomes sad and scary. Jeff hides his emotions by stating that "It doesn't make any difference." It

does! So will this book if students get an opportunity to read it. Few writers are as capable as Cynthia Voigt in portraying the depth of character of Jeff as he reaches his teen years. His long solitary hours produce a rare depth of inner strength,resolve and growth. The book also reveals a rare glimpse into the difficulties of communication between father and son.Development of an understanding and appreciation for each other is subtly achieved.

WHY BLAME THE COMPUTER?

It is too easy to blame the appeal of the computer for many of our educational ills. Consider the current situation: literature certainly does not have a significant place in the majority of classrooms. This is even more shockingly accurate if the literary snippets found in basal readersare not considered. Why? Teachers are simply not plugged into literature! Primemost is the lack of vision to see its full scope. How many teachers actually enjoy reading? The problem is that teachers do not know how to teach literature other than as a basal reader. Compounding this is the influence of television and the declining interest in books in many families.

Bruce Miller in his insightful book Teaching the Art of Literature, (NCTE,1980) asks why we should teach literature. He states that,"we have many forceful drives, or appetites, but we simple do not know how to fulfill some of them until we are

taught, and carefully taught at that....The notion that appreciation of such a beautiful thing as literature need not be taught because everyone naturally loves the beautiful therefore is untrue."(p.10) However, there does come a time when the student independently begins to appreciate and perceive the work as it is and connects it to the rest of the world. At this point, it is time for the teacher to practise restraint.

HOW CAN WE ENSURE THE SURVIVAL OF LITERATURE IN OUR SCHOOLS?

1.MAKE A COMMITTMENT!

It is as simple as that:become a committed reader! A recognized fact should be that it is impossible to teach reading effectively without being a reader! How dare we say that we have successful reading programs when many of our students come away lacking either the desire or the habit of reading? It is preposterous! Teachers must read!

Enjoy your reading! Too frequently, under the pressure of the job, we forget to allow ourselves to achieve the major objective of any literature program--enjoyment! It is not a crime to enjoy reading! Why must so much of our learning be achieved by dull hard work? Computers are appealing because they make work fun. Why is it that novel studies frequently result in less reading, instead of a multiciplicty of books being read?

2.MAKE TIME FOR READING!

In our lives we make time for those things which are important to us. It is the same in the classroom,hence we must consciously make time for the enjoyment of books. We need to make students conscious of the fact that books are user friendly. Obviously, the best way to motivate students towards reading is to read aloud every day. This shared experience,of a minimum of thirty minutes, provides many of the memorable moments which students will recall in later years. Can you remember what was read to you in elementary school? What other teaching activity can you think of that has longer lasting effects? NONE! Not only are you doing a splendid grammar lesson, listening to quality language, but you are also allowing for interaction and response to a literary experience.

Making time to read is frequently translated as U.S.S.R. or Reading Breaks. This may be well and good,but what is really happening? Is it just cop-out time for the teacher, or is the teacher actively involved reading too? Does the librarian visit classes and read too? What about the principal? Do the children get time to discuss their reading? A good book just has to be shared. What ways do you allow for such sharing to occur? Is it by oral reporting, art projects, character role playing, puppetry, writing new adventures or writing to the author? Time devoted to sharing good books should be considered a requisite necessity of any viable reading program.

3. PROMOTE LITERARY ACCESS AS A SYSTEM REQUIREMENT!

If we believe in the value of literature in our classrooms, we must embark on a crusade to convince others around us. This includes not only the children, but the teachers too! Start tomorrow morning in your staffroom--share books you have read over the weekend and display other books on the tables to instigate a voluminous data base. Remember, it is important to start with books at appropiate interest levels. Perhaps, you'll have to wrap books in brown paper to give them proper random access! Once the teachers are online talking about books encourage them to share with the children.

REVIEWING THE BEST!

I have the opportunity to view most of the recently published books for children. The major reason for this is that I write the review section on children's books for Language Arts, the elementary journal of the National Council of Teachers of English. At first each new box was opened with eager anticipation,almost like Christmas all year long. However, as the boxes and mail sacks continued to arrive, and I realized that I was expected to read them, my initial zest abated somewhat. What? Another box? At present it remains a time of immense pleasure,challenge, frustration,excitement and joy. I am

constantly aware of the tremendous responsibility involved. Do I accurately perceive the intentions of the author? Do I capture the essence of the book? Is the book appealing to children or is is more truthfully aimed at adults? Always, I am reminded of the fact that there is so little time for children to read: we must give them the best language and the best literature experiences that we can.

ANALYSIS OF THE BOOKS PUBLISHED FOR CHILDREN IN 1983

The representative sample of children's books that I received for consideration in the review section of Language Arts consisted of 934 hardcover books from forty-nine major American publishing houses. Within the quality and space criteria of this NCTE journal, 146 books (15%) were reviewed in the journal's seven issues.

1. AGE APPEAL OF BOOKS PUBLISHED IN 1983

I would have estimated that the bulk of publishing for children in the United States was for the Young Adult market,being consistent with the observable trends in the mass paperback trade. This, I assumed would be followed by a strong rise in the number of books being published for the pre-school

market,thus reflecting the mini baby boom which is now occuring in North America. I was wrong! The largest number of books are being published for the intermediate age group with 405 books or 53.36%. Secondly, the primary age group with 338 books or 36.19% and finally,the young adult age group with 143 books or 15.31%. This concept changes dramatically if the upper intermediate and young adult cross-over audience is considered. Combining these two similar interest groups, brings the number to 365 books or 39.08% of the total production.

AGE APPEAL: 1983 BOOKS (UNITED STATES)

Lower Primary:.....92 books....9.85%

Upper Primary:.....246 books...26.34%

Lower Intermediate:.183 books...19.59%

Upper Intermediate:.222 books...23.77%

Young Adult:.....143 books...15.31%

All Ages:.....48 books....5.14%

Primary:.....338 books...36.19%

Intermediate:.....405 books...43.36%

In a corresponding attempt to compare the 1983 Canadian output, 144 books were located. It is important to note that

there is not any one source in Canada which knows the precise number of new titles which have been produced in this country: neither the Children's Book Centre in Toronto, the National Library, nor the issues of Quill & Quire. It is, however, estimated that 150 titles were published in 1983.

The Canadian publishing industry appears to emulate the same general trends found in the United States but with a different emphasis. The vast majority of books were designed with intermediate children as the target market. This includes 84 books or 58.33% of the national production. Picture books follow with 36 being produced (25%). It is surprising that young adult fiction comprises only 16 books or 11.11% of the market. If,however, the upper intermediate and the young adult are combined together it then composes of 44.44% (64 books) of the entire production.

AGE APPEAL: 1983 BOOKS (CANADA)

Lower Primary:.....12 books...8.33%

Upper Primary:.....24 books..16.67%

Lower Intermediate:..36 books..25.00%

Upper Intermediate:..48 books..33.33%

Young Adult:.....16 books..11.11%

All Ages:.....8 books...5.56%

Primary:.....36 books..25.00%

Intermediate:.....84 books..58.33%

2. TYPE OF BOOKS PUBLISHED FOR CHILDREN IN 1983

There appears to be three major types of books which have been published in the United States in 1983. It is not surprising that more fiction was published than anything else, accounting for 361 books (38.65%). This was followed by picture books (27.52%) and information books (20.45%).

TYPE OF BOOKS: 1983 (UNITED STATES)

FICTION:.....361 Books...38.65%

PICTURE BOOK:.....257 Books...27.52%

NONFICTION:.....191 Books...20.45%

FOLKLORE:.....26 Books....2.78%

BIOGRAPHY:.....25 Books....2.68%

POETRY:.....23 Books....2.46%

BOARD BOOKS:.....22 Books....2.36%

RIDDLES:.....9 Books.... .96%

POPUP BOOKS:.....8 Books.... .86%

UNUSUAL FORMAT:.....5 Books.... .54%

BIBLE:.....3 Books.... .32%

The Canadian scene reflected fewer(7) general types of publications compared to the United States (12). An unusually high proportion of fiction books were produced in comparison to picture books, nearly double the number of titles. Information books were the third most popular publication choice (19.44%). Canadian publishers also showed a stronger interest in poetry and biography than did their American counterparts.

TYPES OF BOOKS: 1983 (CANADA)

FICTION:.....66 Books...45.83%

PICTURE BOOKS:.....34 Books...23.61%

NONFICTION:.....28 Books...19.44%

BIOGRAPHY:.....6 Books....4.17%

POETRY:.....5 Books....3.47%

FOLKLORE:.....4 Books....2.78%

POPUP BOOKS:.....1 Books.... .69%

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3. PRICES OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS PUBLISHED IN 1983

It is not surprising to realize the necessity for the gradual increase in the price of children's books from the primary to the young adult level. It is evident that the publishers are still making a conscious attempt to keep the price of elementary books below the ten dollar mark.

The pricing of Canadian books reflects a smaller market as well as higher paper and production costs. What is rather remarkable is the marked similarity of prices at the intermediate level. This is in sharp contrast to the price differences noted at the primary level.

PRICES: 1983 BOOKS (UNITED STATES)

LOWER PRIMARY:.....$6.71(CAN 8.36)
UPPER PRIMARY:.....$9.30(CAN 11.53)
LOWER INTERMEDIATE:.....$9.48(CAN 11.74)
UPPER INTERMEDIATE:.....$10.24(CAN 12.70)
YOUNG ADULT:.....$11.44(CAN 14.19)
ALL AGES:.....$10.74(CAN 13.32)

PRICES: 1983 BOOKS (CANADA)

LOWER PRIMARY:.....$10.38

UPPER PRIMARY:.....$12.13

LOWER INTERMEDIATE:.....$10.90

UPPER INTERMEDIATE:.....$10.95

YOUNG ADULT:.....$13.38

ALL AGES:.....$10.70

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4. NUMBER OF PAGES IN 1983 CHILDREN'S BOOKS

The mean number of pages in the books for various age levels reflects the gradual increase in reading ability and sophistication of the child reader. It should be noted that the twenty-seven page average for primary books does not appear to consider the standard thirty-two-page(double-signature) basis of publishing, however, there were many small books produced. Generally, Canadian publishing tended to have a more conservative stance with few mean pages for each age level.

PAGES: 1983 BOOKS (UNITED STATES/CANADA)

LOWER PRIMARY:.....27.26 PAGES (35.5)

UPPER PRIMARY:.....36.61 PAGES (30.27)

LOWER INTERMEDIATE:..70.67 PAGES (77.76)

UPPER INTERMEDIATE:.127.95 PAGES (100.22)

YOUNG ADULT:.....198.14 PAGES (122.83)

PRIMARY:.....34.06 PAGES

INTERMEDIATE:..... 102.07 PAGES

THE FUTURE IS NOW!

The decisions of the future will be made by the children reading today. Do we really want to consider the world to come as conceived by the writers for young people? Is it a case of the return of Star Wars? (George Lucas,Random) Are we prepared for the harsh sterile environments as perceived by Monica Hughes in SPACE TRAP,(Groundwood) or Robert Swindell in The Moonpath?(Carolrhoda) Perhaps it will be the controlled cities and lack of privacy as viewed in Irma Walker's Portal to E'ewere. Are the carnivorous forests in Space Trap actually conceivable? Will super-intelligent beings cruise the heavens as in The Isis Pedlar,(Monica Hughes,Atheneum) only to visit and bring havoc to more primitive planetary cultures? Will the earth at some time be abandoned as suggested in Pamela Sargent's new book, The Eye

of the Comet, (Harper) only to require assistance to survive? Is it possible to preserve the best of humankind and start over again? Such is the proposal in Earthseed (Pamela Sargent,Harper) where deep inside the mind-controlled ship embroys for a new generation were safely frozen awaiting the right time. Only something else was there: must evil, greed, and suspicion always be akin to human kind?

These recent adventures pit young people against harsh environments, challenging assignments or dangerous situations. Will the young heros be able to conquer the dark forces of evil as persistent in Omega Station (Alfred Slote, Lippincot)or Element of Time (Cathy Livoni,Harcourt)? In the process, each gains, as does the Young Legionary(Douglas Hill,Atheneum), a remarkable depth of maturity. The overall effect is one of positive facing of challenges and successful strategies for dealing with them.

It is important to realize that what children read today will influence the decisions they make in the future. Hence, the quality of what they read will influence all of us. What was the major focus of the books published in 1983? What types of books do publishers think will sell? Are there titles which will appeal to terminal readers? It is obvious that the publishers have to be concerned with selling books: their profits and the continuance of their company depend upon it. School and library

budgets slashed, mass market promotion techniques have been adopted in order to bring books back on line.

1983 BOOKS: WHAT WILL APPEAL TO THE BUYING PUBLIC?

1. OLD FAVOURITES!

People buy what they already know and enjoy. Hence, this has been the year for the reissuance of many classic titles enhanced by enticing new illustrations. These reflect the publishers growing realization of the economy of their backlists;no editing requirements and print plates already available. The royalities for authors are less too--particularly if the author is dead!

What we have witnessed in 1983 is at least two new editions of The Velveteen Rabbit; one with the romantic interpretation of Michael Hague and one recalling Allen Atkinson's favourite toy. The fact that the copyright on this title expired last year and it is now in the public domain is inconsequential! There have also been new editions of Gulliver's Travels, Alice in Wonderland,Pinocchio, and the Grimm stories.

The Highwayman came riding...riding...riding. Charles Mikolaycak's new edition of Alfred Noyes' familiar ballad, The Highwayman, (Lothrop) dramatically frames bold illustrations within broad white borders. Their terse starkness focuses the attention of the viewer and accentuates the hypnotic power of black shading. The heavy funereal tone is stunning enhanced by the impact of a sense of line, as seen in the billowing hair and flowing ribbon, as well as by the red tonal highlighting to accentuate the mask, the uniforms, the flash of the bullet and the diffusion of spilled blood. To more fully appreciate the ballad's visual interpretation, students should be encouraged to study Charles Keeping's stark negative images. These produce a haunting melancholic feeling as the ghostly setting sun foreshadows impending doom. (Oxford, 1982)

Each season sees the perennial return of Dicken's The Christmas Carol. Trina Schart Hyman (Holiday House) vibrantly captures the atmosphere of Dickensian London with its narrow fog-enshrowed streets as well as translucent ghostly phantoms of the past. Memories of favourite dolls are revived in Mary Anne. (Lothrop) Originally published in 1879, the soft sepia shadings delicately enhance the charm and simplicity of Mary Mapes Dodge's old-fashioned doll story. A joyful contrast is found in Janet Stevens' view of Edward Lear's The Owl and the Pussy Cat. (Holiday House) She achieves an air of fun and mischevious delight as the sun-bleached colors whimsomely radiate

the character's festive mood. Casting their shoes aside this romantic duo could have danced all night!

Unique in all dragondom, Michael Hague's huge-headed jowly beast for The Reluctant Dragon (Holt)is complete with green scales and warts. He sits complacently and smirks as he awaits the arrival of St.George. The illustrations compliment the richly descriptive passages of Kenneth Grahame's prose.

2. TRADITIONAL FOLK TALES

1983 was not especially noted for vast numbers of folk tales, but those that were published certainly made a powerful visual impact. It is exciting to compare two versions of the Grimm Brothers' Little Red Cap(Morrow) and Little Red Riding Hood.(Holiday House) Lisbeth Zwerger's delicately conceived representation of Little Red Cap's trip through the fog enshrouded forest has a hauntingly hypnotic quality. It is unfortunate that a jarring distortion presents a rather graphic return of the grandmother from the wolf's stomach. Trina Schart Hyman views Red Riding Hood as an 'aged'little girl with enormous,innocent eyes and tall button boots. Adult connoisseurs will rave over the cleverness of the patterned borders while delighting in the delicate composition of the numerous floral vignettes. Here too, an inconsistency of characterization of the wolf and the grandmother results in an unsettling sensation that

all is not quite right.

Curled cunningly across the marbelized end papers, a hairy-brown tail entices the reader to experience the remarkable weaving of vision and tale present in Nonny Hogrogian's etherial The Devil With the Three Golden Hairs.(Knopf) The delicately shaded scenes, masterfully composed within traditional frames, dramatically out-step or slither beyond these visual constraints.

Snowdrops in January? Even in British Columbia this is not always the case, but goodness and kindness prevail as a young Czech girl is sent to find these beautiful white flowers in the midst of a winter storm. In Samuel Marshak's retelling of The Month Brothers. (Morrow) she is able to befriend the brothers, who are visually portrayed in icon-like groupings. If only the same results could happen to the selfish step-sister!

3. HUMOUR

1983 was a good year to laugh! Whether it was with shadows,ducks, hippos, or guinea pigs,it was a joyful time indeed. Imagine an entire book of chuckles and pleasing moments! Jack Prelutsky, after many years and reading of 6,000 poems presents a remarkable collection of over 500 poems in The Random House Book of Poetry for Children.(Random House) This book alludes to the children's natural ear for poetry and their appreciation of humour,rhythm and a sense of the unexpected.

There are poems in this collection for literally everyone.

A related book of poetry which has mass appeal is Arnold Lobel's The Book of Pigericks;Pig Limmericks. (Harper)These capture the flavour of ... "There was an old pig with a pen/ Who wrote stories now and then..." These lines glimpse Lobel's self-reflecting approach to his collection of plump pink porkers!

Having a feeling of being able to out-wit a book is a source of humor to children. Dick Gackenbach in Mr Wink and His Shadow,Ned.(Harper) invites children to experience the frustration felt by short Mr.Wink when he has an argument with his tall shadow Ned. They will be able to chuckle over the mutual frustration of feeling lost without one's shadow. This book can be splendidly used with Marcia Brown's Caldecot Award Winner Shadow. (Scribners,1982)

An aspect of humour which was present last year in the United States, and successfully shared by British authors, is remembering back to the treasured moments of being really small! Shirley Hughes knows the importance of feet to young children and the joy of having new yellow boots! Her clever blending of text and illustration in Alfie's Feet(Lothrop) adds zest and vitality to a child's everyday happenings. A sense of warm realism pervades the calm acceptance of the parents. Another book captures the thrill of going to ballet class for the first time. The unexpected happenings are poignantly caught in Helen Oxenbury's The Dancing Class (Dial) in which the little girl

shares what she has learned--to gallop! Katharine Holabird in Angelina Ballerina illustrates the dedication of a young mouse with a strong need to dance. Pleasingly pale watercolors compliment the tone of felicity present in the story. Expressive rodent features ratify the distinct nature of each characterization. The droll pictorialization,full of adult innuendos from the world of ballet,guarantees delight.

4. NEW PERSPECTIVES PROVIDE MEMORABLE MOMENTS

1983 provided many visual surprises, insights, and thoughtful moments; thus giving readers a second look at their world while capturing many moments of greatness for the annals of literature for children.

I feel that the essential criteria for judging quality illustrations can be determined by asking whether they continue to enrich the lives of the readers. Walt Disney books are cute to look at the first time, interesting the second but only mundane after that. Quality illustrations offer the readers insightful glimpses with each new viewing.

It has been observed that most children's books provide a direct face-on perspective of the action. This may well be an accurate observation,but 1983 saw the emergence of many new perspectives to challenge the imagination of the readers.

The enchantment of flight provided motivation for several notable books this past year. Sweeping wide-angle paintings, sharing unique glimpses of French daily life, are characteristic of Alice and Martin Provensen's Caldecott Award-Winning book, The Glorious Flight Across the Channel with Louis Beleriot,July 25,1909.(Viking) The illustrators provide a refreshing alteration of perspective,thus giving an unusual sensation of distance and height.

The dream of being able to fly has been with us since the time of the early stories of Icarus. It is possible as Mordicai Gerstein shares in Arnold of the Ducks.(Harper) Feathers adhered by mud and marsh-slime help a young boy to joyously experience soaring like a bird. The text, full of humorous understatement, is accompanied by such rollicking illustrations that the fantasy becomes highly believable.

Sailing the skies? The remarkable explanation of a derelict boat in The Wreck of the Zephyr(Houghton Mifflin) is hauntingly captured in Chris Van Allsburg's moody oil paintings. How do you teach an orphaned pelican to fly and fish? A young French boy is portrayed by Brian Wildsmith in his innovative Pelican trying to tame an unusual bird which hatched from a strange large egg. Split-pages increase the sense of action,surprise and intrigue. The end has a great beginning!

Have you ever tried to remember a place where you grew up and everything was perfect-the best in the world? Byrd Baylor in

The Best Town in the World(Scribners) shares memories of every day events with a special appreciation for the unique richness of ordinary experiences.

"The way my father said it,
You could tell
It was a special thing
to be
One of those people."

Ronald Himler's expansive watercolours reflect the vast western vistas with its enormity of cloud-filled skies and endless horizons. They also radiate the air of conviviality found amidst the jammed shelves of a country store.

There were scary moments in the books of 1983 too. Pleasant Dreams (Holt) by Anna Francis is a picture book which uses few words but features deliciously ferocious green monsters with huge eyes, teeth, horns and claws. Suspensefully they sneak into the bedroom of a little girl, scaring even her stuffed animals. In the end it is the reader who for a moment is delightfully surprised! BIG can be frightening! Robert Munsch realizes a young child's fears in David's Father(Annick) as the new neighbour's father is really GIGANTIC! Thankfully his heart is too!

Making a dirty mark on a clean page can be most memorable particularly if you did it! The unceasing but frustrating efforts of Alan Baker's hamster in Benjamin's Book(Lothrop)to

clean up the page warmly demonstrates much human ineptiness in his attempts. This book can be viewed as a process of art in action.

Rachel Isadora's City Seen From A to Z(Greenwillow) is an alphabet book revealing a new way to view life on the sidewalks of a city. Each drawing unexpectedly reveal's New York's colorful rhymthm,ethnic diversity, humanness and humor.'I' is for sharing ice cream with your grandmother, 'C' is for a car wash from a fire hydrant and Z is for the zoo being drawn on the sidewalk!

Susan Cooper's first novel in seven years,Seaward(Atheneum) provides a memorable reading experience for older readers. Cally, after passing through a mirror to the other side meets a boy. Together they journey on their quest for the sea. The struggle to overcome the evil influence of the Lady Taranis ensures that the reader is caught in the allegorical reality of the quest. The vibrancy of writing style and richness of descriptive language is inherent as the author creates a remarkable echo-image of our own world.

To be different is dangerous! Clare Bell's prehistoric cat-like creature in Ratha's Creature(Atheneum), trained to survive and herd domesticated beasts, experienced rejection from her clan when she tried to share her fire-creature with its red hot tongue. This book is a powerful recreation of a plausible past world with glimpses into the impact of leadership styles and

the dominate influence of tradition.

If you are what you eat, Going Vegetarian: A Guide for Teen-Agers(Morrow) may provide the momentary imputus to change your life! One warning: Sada Fretz' book,because of its logical clearly-written style, will be as popular with the teachers as with the students. After reading this book, 1984 could well become the year of the asparagus!

5. SELF DISCOVERY

1983 provided time to learn about ourselves by reading about the lives of others. Perhaps no other book is as insightful in this regard as is Lois Lowry's Taking Care of Terrific.(Houghton Mifflin) A young fourteen-year-old girl,while babysitting a four-year-old boy for the summer, unsuspectingly has her view of the world and people changed. The reader gradually becomes aware of the complexity of children's thinking, the futility of many adult-imposed rules and of the uncertainty of being misled by stereotyping people.

Leigh Botts,through his letters to his favourite author in Beverly Cleary's Dear Mr. Henshaw(Morrow), grows in sensitivity and understanding of himself and even of his parents. A dramatic contrast to Leigh Botts is seen in the characterization of Hazel in Vera and Bill Cleaver's Hazel Rye.(Lippincott) This determined and opinionated young girl in rural Florida appreciates the value

of her own originality. Her life is changed, when, after renting a cabin in the family orchard to some people who were different, she is gradually influenced to develop a love of plants and an appreciation of reading.

Discovering an unusual ability in yourself is something faced by characters in books. William Sleator introduces us to 18-year-old Sam in Fingers.(Atheneum) When his step-brother, a former child prodigy appears washed up, his mother commands him to create some music by a deceased Hungarian composer. The step-brother seemingly created these pieces while he slept. It works for a while,except for an old man who attends each concert and appears to know the pieces. Who really did write the music?

When Thaddeus Blinn gives precisely the wish requested, you had best word it very carefully! Four people found out in Bill Brittain's The Wish Giver;Three Tales of Coven Tree,(Harper)and long remembered the experience. Each wish was related to the character's perceived desires,but they each neglected to consider the unexpected happenings which could result from a careless wording of it.

Frog and Toad would be pleased to have Hippo for a friend. A light-hearted whimsical quality is found in Mike Thaler's It's Me,Hippo!(Harper) The simplistic language of the four tales is reminiscent of a dialogue with Eeyore! Imagine telling the sick snake to stay off his feet! Simple yet charming line drawings personify each character and their emotions. Young children will

be able to relate to Hippo's plight as these sorts of things happen regularly to them too. Mildred Walter understands this feeling in My Mama Needs Me.(Lothrop) A young boy gives up playing with his friends when his new baby sister comes home. He just might be needed by his mother. After helping to bathe the baby and receiving a warm hug, he goes happily off to join his friends.

The wildness of children is captured in two similar but diverse books. Felice Holman presents a disturbing picture of the hoardes of children who were left to roam the streets following the fall of the Czar in Russia. The Wild Children(Scribeners) follows the plight of one young boy as he is befriended and becomes a valuable part of a homeless band of youngsters. Jane Yolen's Children of the Wolf,(Viking,1984) is based on the diary of a British Missionary in India. Two misshapen children were found living deep within a wolves' den. Taken to an orphanage they had a profound effect on the life of the young boy assigned to take care of them. The reader cannot help but become involved in this psychological drama pitting fierce instincts against cool rational reserve.

There is an urgency in considering quality books for our children. As an article in the Vancouver Sun reported recently, "TOMORROW IS BECOMING YESTERDAY." The present direction of social and political trends is toward the past. It is reflected by such terms as restraint,control and censorship. The Committee on Literature of the National Council of Teachers of English states its concern as it notes that there is "a general decline in exposure of students to literature at all levels --a curriculum trend aggravated by the fact that 'literature specialists are either giving up or are losing control of the library acquisitions.'" We must become concerned if literature is to provide an humanizing balance to the computer technology in the classroom. We shall have to actively fight for its place by selecting only the best books for our children and by making time to read an important issue in the school.

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